

DCI/IC 74-017  
6 February 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Proctor  
Mr. Carver  
Mr. Knoche

SUBJECT: Warsaw Pact Air Power

1. I have just read the IR on Warsaw Pact air power [redacted] I think this is the best thing I have read on tactical air in many, many years. Hank's people are to be commended.

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2. In my view tactical aviation deserves an NIE of its own. It never has received proper treatment in the omnibus 11-14's. The OSR piece could be fleshed out to include some of the companion subjects, such as air defense of theater forces, ECM capabilities of tactical aviation, air logistics as a part of the total theater force logistics problem, and a thorough analysis of sortie rates for Warsaw Pact air units (as opposed to aircraft which has been the basis for many other sortie rate estimates). Another aspect of the tactical air threat to NATO which has never been sufficiently addressed in national intelligence is the effect of base loading and base-to-target capabilities of Soviet tactical aircraft on overall operational capabilities. In this respect an excellent DDO report which gives the distance from the front lines at which various kinds of aircraft are based in Warsaw Pact doctrine has never been brought to bear on this subject. It should be.

3. From briefings I have heard in the last year or so there is a tendency to discuss Warsaw Pact tactical aviation in the terms applicable in the mid-60's. A good deal has happened since then and, as the OSR paper points out, they are of fundamental importance to NATO. The subject will never be properly aired in an estimate that is also struggling with the old interagency squabbles about ground forces, their effectiveness, mobilization and movement, and the like.

4. If the NIO could get DIA to agree to take the OSR report as the backbone of an NIE, fleshed out with the above noted considerations, I believe that valuable national intelligence would be the result. There would almost certainly be disagreements with the OSR paper in DIA. [redacted]

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I think there would be a difference with DIA--certainly with the Air Force--on the sortie rate problem. These differences have been papered over in the past and should be aired now.

5. If this notion makes sense to the NIO, there is a bearing on the MC-161 conference to take place this spring. The US delegation will be bidding for the section of the paper to be drafted in the US next year. If a thorough combing out of the tactical aviation problem is in the books, the tacair section of MC-161 should be the US choice for next year's drafting responsibility.

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